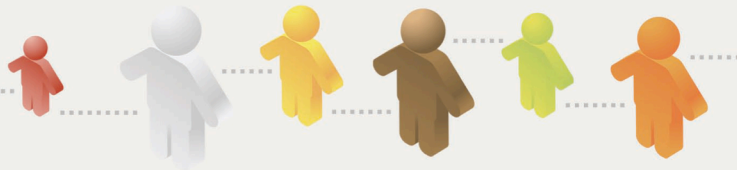


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Civic Learning Online



Young Citizens and Civic Learning: Two Paradigms of Citizenship in the Digital Age

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A Report from the Civic Learning Online Project

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Abstract: How can civic education keep pace with changing political identifications and practices of new generations of citizens? We examine research on school-based civic education in different post-industrial democracies with the aim of deriving a set of core learning categories. Most school-based approaches reflect traditional paradigms of dutiful citizenship (DC) oriented to government through parties and voting, with citizens forming attentive publics who follow events in the news. While this model may appeal to some young people, research suggests that it produces mixed learning outcomes, and may not capture the full range of learning and engagement styles of recent generations of citizens. We expand upon these conventional learning categories by identifying additional civic learning opportunities that reflect more self-actualizing (AC) styles of civic participation common among recent generations of youth who have been termed digital natives. Their AC learning styles favor interactive, networked activities often communicated with participatory media production such as videos shared across online networks. The result is an expanded set of learning categories that can be used to design, document, and compare civic learning in different environments from schools to online communities.

The specter of a youth civic engagement crisis has spread through academic, government and education policy circles in many post-industrial democracies. The most prominent response is to reinvigorate school-based approaches to civic education with the aim of re-connecting young people to the very political institutions that they seem

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most skeptical about. For example, at the end of the last century the United Kingdom established a high profile panel called the Advisory Group on Citizenship. The white paper issued by that panel (often termed the Crick report after its chair, Bernard Crick) made this its first recommendation:

We unanimously advise...that citizenship and the teaching of democracy...is so important both for schools and the life of the nation that there must be a statutory requirement on schools to ensure that it is part of the entitlement of all pupils. It can no longer sensibly be left as uncoordinated local initiatives which vary greatly in number, content and method. This is an inadequate basis for animating the idea of a common citizenship with democratic values. (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 1998)

The report then proceeded to define what good citizenship is and what the outcomes of civic education should be. The definitions of these things acknowledged the possibility for greater empowerment of young citizens but framed the notion of citizenship itself in terms of references to the Greeks and to a classic text on the subject from 1950. There was little notion that citizenship may have changed in the interim or how new educational approaches might adapt to changing social identities or newly emerging learning preferences among recent generations of young citizens.

Variations on such initiatives have gone forward in other nations. For example, in the United States more than 40 education experts, government officials and education policy organizations have launched a Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools (CCMC). This campaign, like the initiative in the U.K., points to schools as the crucial

sites of civic learning, and makes little reference to how young people themselves may see their citizen roles differently from their elders. However, the CCMC campaign does take a progressive turn in suggesting that methods of civic education may extend beyond textbooks to critical engagement with issues and community involvement:

To keep our democracy strong, we must reverse the decline of civic participation and engage the next generation of citizens. The most effective way to nurture citizenship is to make civic learning an essential part of our nation's schools.

Civic learning teaches the fundamental ideas of American democracy and prepares young people to take on the rights and responsibilities of self-government. Yes, it instructs students in the facts, perspectives, and procedures of government, history, and law, but civic learning extends far beyond "how a bill becomes a law." Civic learning encourages students to practice democratic processes; it invites critical thinking and discussion of complex issues; it offers opportunities for students to get involved in the life of their communities. (Civic Mission of Schools 2008b)

A far more ambitious initiative in Australia was launched in response to poor performance on the International Education Association's international civic assessment study of 90,000 14 year olds in 28 countries and 50,000 17-19 year olds in 16 countries during 1999-2000 (Torney-Purta *et al.*,2001). The Australian Council of Education Research (ACER) acknowledged that many young citizens seemed uninterested in conventional civic outcomes such as joining political parties or following issues in the media, yet larger numbers were interested in becoming engaged with specific issues (e.g., environment, human rights) and felt that political activities outside government made more sense to them. The ACER recommendations for education reform included

a mix of conventional learning outcomes, such as knowledge of national political institutions, augmented with goals that seem more in tune with changing civic orientations of young people, such as understanding the everyday lived experiences of young people and their apparent alienation from conventional political life. Among other recommendations was the idea of democratizing the civics classroom. While this approach seems more in tune with social identity shifts and learning styles among many adolescents in late modern societies, it met considerable resistance in Australian schools and related education institutions. Few schools implemented the recommendations for addressing the changing participation and learning preferences of young Australians (Mellor *et al.* 2001).

Adding to these cross-national patterns is an insightful study by Davies and Issitt (2005) of prominent civics texts and related teaching materials in Canada, Australia and England. They found that, despite the contested nature of both citizenship and civic education: “all three countries tend, in the textbooks we have examined, to emphasize forms of citizenship education that may submerge citizen empowerment under essentially orthodox agendas.” (Davies and Issitt 2005, p. 389)

These and other cases suggest at least three important points about citizenship and civic education in the current era. First, there is a continuing tendency for education authorities in many nations to impose conventional definitions of citizenship and standards for measuring it, even in the face of resistance from young citizens who typically fail to perform well on those measures. Second, even in nations such as Australia, where changing youth civic identity and learning styles have been recognized, educational institutions often prove resistant to change. Third, despite mounting evidence that schools and related civic education curricula generally show poor results

in helping young people learn to become motivated and effective citizens, there is a persistent belief among adult authorities that civic education still must occur in schools. As a prominent participant in one of the above national initiatives told one of the authors, when queried about why schools remain the dominant focus of civic learning: “because that’s where the kids are.”

It turns out that kids are in lots of other places too. For example, many young people participate in after school youth programs, which represent large-scale opportunities for civic learning. Increasing numbers of young people also spend time in online environments, many of which offer civic engagement opportunities that are more in tune with the appeal of social networking and participatory media creation among peers (Jenkins 2006). The question is how to understand how civic learning in various environments can address the changing civic orientations and lived political experiences of younger generations.

Two Paradigms of Citizen Identity

The persistence of nations in imposing definitions of citizenship which seem out of touch with the lives of recent generations of citizens stands as an important reminder that citizenship is a dynamic social construction that reflects changing social and political conditions. For example, in his history of citizenship in the United States, Schudson (1998) describes numerous transformations of the “good citizen” through various eras of social and political change. He observes that the United States is currently undergoing a transitional phase from a citizenship rooted in obligation and expectations for active

public involvement to more personalized formulations oriented around individual rights and more passive monitoring of the political environment.

Based on earlier work by Bennett (1998, 2007, 2008) we propose that although each nation displays unique civic orientations, there are also common cross-national changes among post-industrial democracies that entail broad structural dislocations associated with globalization. Beginning in the late 1980s and into the 1990s, many observers began to detect important changes in the social and political orientations of younger generations in the post-industrial democracies. For example, in his survey of 43 nations, Inglehart (1997) noted a shift toward a “post material” politics marked by a diminished sense of the personal relevance of government and growing dissatisfaction with the working of democratic processes. At the same time, younger citizens displayed increased interest in political issues such as environmental quality, human rights, and consumer politics. Theorists of this late modern social formation argue that global restructuring of economies and production have created profound changes in national institutions from families to political parties, and left individuals with increased personal responsibility and risk (Beck 1999, 2000). Giddens (1991) argued that social identity processes have changed as well: toward increased individual responsibility for managing personal identity as individuals become detached from modern organizations and institutions that provided commonly shared status, social memberships and related identity ascription.

Bennett (1998) argues that these changes have produced a shifting politics among younger citizens who are less inclined to feel a sense of duty to participate politically in conventional ways such as voting or following issues in the news, while displaying a greater inclination to embrace issues that connect to lifestyle values, ranging from moral

concerns to environmental quality. These lifestyle politics entail greater personally expressive or self-actualizing affiliations that can be fluid and changing. By contrast the sense of duty to participate through civic organizations, parties and elections is still embraced by many older citizens who continue to identify with the defining institutions (party, church, union, service organization) of fragmenting modern civil societies. In short, ongoing processes of social change have produced two paradigms of citizenship that are distinctively meaningful to different age groups in many democracies: the dutiful citizen (DC) and the actualizing citizen (AC). Some of the defining characteristics of these citizen identity types are outlined in Table I.

(AC) Actualizing Citizen	(DC) Dutiful Citizen
Weak sense of duty to participate in government	Strong sense of duty to participate in government
Focus on lifestyle politics: political consumerism, volunteering, social activism	Voting is the core democratic act:
Mistrust of media and politicians – less likely to follow politics in the news	Higher trust in leaders and media - informed about issues and government-follows the news
Joins loose networks for social action – communicates through digital media	Joins social organizations, interest groups, parties – communicates via mass media

Table I: Citizen Identity Paradigms in Post Industrial Democracies

These are of course ideal types, and do not imply that all members of demographics born after, say 1980 are AC citizens or that all born before their societies experienced the impact of globalization display DC qualities. Many young people who grow up today in more conventional modernist families and institutional contexts continue to acquire DC identifications. Likewise, many senior citizens who participated in the protest and liberation politics of the 1960s and 1970s may embrace the more fluid styles of AC politics, tempered by a sense of obligation to follow issues in the news and vote. However, the general pattern in survey research is that there are marked generational differences in civic practices and styles of affiliation (e.g., Lopez *et al.* 2006), with older generations experiencing citizenship more in terms of duty to participate in elections, parties, service organizations, and other government-centered activities (Putnam 2000). By contrast, younger generations coming of age in late modern social systems (with fewer organizational memberships and more horizontal, fluid personal networks) experience many of the core party, election and government elements of politics as distant, inauthentic, and often unresponsive to their lived political experiences (Coleman 2008, Coleman and Blumler 2009). These younger generations tend to favor more personally expressive or self-actualizing politics that occasionally emerge in elections such as the Obama campaign in the U.S. in 2008, but more often find outlets in direct action networks organized around issues such as global warming, corporate responsibility, or trade justice.

The goal of rethinking civic learning is not to point to one correct model of citizenship, but to acknowledge that citizen identity is dynamic, and that more than a single compelling citizen reality operates in many societies. Several implications of these competing realities will be discussed here. First, recognizing different paradigms of

citizenship helps explain why many well meaning civic education efforts fail: they are implicitly or explicitly premised on a particular (dutiful) citizen model that is out of phase with the (actualizing) identity styles and learning preferences of many young people. Second, the problem with civic education is not so much that the focus on government and textbook knowledge of institutions and processes is wrong. Indeed, democracy is importantly based on formal institutions and processes. However, if efforts to get younger generations to appreciate the importance of government or following politics in the news are to succeed, they must also be combined with recognition of the interest of many younger citizens to approach politics from more personal standpoints that permit greater participation in the definition of issues, production of information and construction of action.

Citizen Identity and Learning

The uneven performance of schools on many civic education measures may not be due to the rejection of politics by young people, as many observers have suggested, but to the disproportionate emphasis in schools on one brand of politics and citizenship. Evidence presented in the next section shows that young citizens in many countries are unreceptive to particular types of civic education training, particularly those focused on duty-bound engagement with government. Other evidence discussed below suggests that greater learning occurs when students are able to participate in developing their own standpoints in more open classroom environments that permit freer flows of experience-based learning and online knowledge sharing. In particular, the information culture associated with digital media and social networking in which most young people are immersed leads to a different set of dispositions about relationships to civic

knowledge and its various components such as: authority, credibility, production, consumption, and sharing of information.

Jenkins (2006), for example, suggests that young people immersed in digital culture have a set of learning dispositions that depart significantly from those typically found in many classrooms. They typically favor loose network affiliations over individual information reception. They favor expression through producing (rather than simply consuming) creative content. They prefer collaborative problem-solving over individual approaches. And they are disposed toward shaping the circulation or flow of the results of these peer-to-peer activities, as opposed to more passive audience relationships to one-way information flows. (Jenkins 2006, p. 3) Related preferences for more open or democratic classrooms are associated with gains on various civic learning outcomes (Campbell 2005). These learning styles prevail both in and outside the classroom. Coleman (2008) has observed that the degree of autonomy or peer control over web environments enhances the credibility of political online communities (Coleman 2008). These generational engagement and learning styles map nicely onto the citizen paradigms outlined above, creating very different orientations to information and knowledge acquisition as described in Table 2.

AC Civic Learning Styles**DC Civic Learning Styles**

Interactive, project based, peer-to-peer networked information sharing	Authoritative, text-based one-way knowledge transmission to individuals
Participatory media creation	Passive media consumption
Preference for democratic environments – learners participate in creating content and assessing credibility	Knowledge and skills and assessed by external standards – little learner content creation or peer assessment

Table 2: Civic Learning Styles and Civic Identity

In exploring these civic learning paradigm differences, we seek to develop approaches to civic learning that bridge different conceptions of politics and citizenship. For example, the motivational appeal of AC learning strategies may help young citizens find meaningful ways to engage with the institutions of government (including recognizing the legitimacy of protest and reform movements). Since schools are often not the best environments for introducing conditions that motivate civic learning – particularly for the lower socioeconomic groups who are most at risk of not becoming active citizens – we also seek to identify approaches that can be implemented and observed in online environments that may be more attractive. *The overall goal is to work toward a well defined and accepted set of civic learning practices that help schools better address changing youth identities and that recognize online environments as credible sites of learning.*

We begin with a brief look at what we know about school-based civic learning outcomes, primarily using studies of the United States with comparisons to IEA cross national results. These findings bring into sharp relief how failures to address changing citizen identity paradigms and learning preferences may account for generally poor results, particularly in lower SES populations. Despite offering little in the way of personally engaging experience with politics and government, school based civic learning does offer an important legacy: a well developed (if often unmet) set of civic learning practices and assessments upon which we can build by identifying and adding practices that better capture AC citizen styles, and that better address the learning potential in online environments.

Understanding the Limits of Schools

After Langton and Jennings' (1968) landmark study of high school civics education found few benefits of instructing young Americans in civics, academic interest in civic education waned in many of the social sciences outside of the field of education. Toward the end of the century, concerns in many nations about a youth engagement crisis renewed both national and comparative research. In the U.S., for example, Niemi and Chapman (1998) found that general progress in school was a good predictor of several forms of engagement, including attention to news, a sense of efficacy in communicating with government, a sense of understanding government, and tolerance of others' views. The dilemma presented by this finding is that for the successful student, civic knowledge appears to be acquired much as knowledge of any other subject: as tested academic information.

What is on those civics tests? A 2006 U. S. Civic and Political Health Survey of the Nation found that civics instruction remained an overwhelmingly DC academic subject, with 41 percent of high school students reporting the primary focus as “the Constitution or the U.S. system of government and how it works.” The next leading topics were: “wars and military battles” (32 percent), and “great American heroes and the virtues of the American form of government” (26 percent). Only 11 percent of high school students reported a focus on problems facing the country today or racism and other forms of injustice in the American system. (CIRCLE 2006). In such an environment, the best case scenario seems to be for an elite stratum of academic achievers to acquire the trappings of dutiful citizenship, while the majority of students (particularly those in the lower SES and academic tiers) are not well prepared for successful careers as citizens at all. Indeed, for the U.S. IEA sample, students from less advantaged homes scored well below international means on knowledge and civic skills measures (Torney-Purta and Barber 2004).

When civic skills are distributed along lines of academic performance and socioeconomic status, the capacity of schools to develop a broad democratic citizenry is in doubt. Similar classroom patterns appeared in many nations in the International Education Association cross-national study at the end of the last century (Torney-Purta *et al.* 1999, 2000). The preponderance of student experiences in most nations primarily reflected textbook oriented academic exercises emphasizing predominantly traditional DC citizen orientations.

More recently, Niemi and Junn (2005) have demonstrated some important additional effects of schools in fostering civic skills. However, the evidence of school effectiveness remains generally uneven, with highest outcomes persisting in high SES

schools and among student demographics where family socialization, academic achievement, and other external factors bode well for civic participation independent of school experience. Moreover, regimented academic approaches to teaching predominantly DC civic standards provide a poor foundation for developing more general engagement skills and positive orientations to government. For example, Syvertsen et al. (2007) found generally *negative* outcomes in classrooms that limited student input in discussion topics and processes. In such closed environments, some communication-related classroom activities actually diminished students' sense of political voice. Similarly, in more regimented classrooms, exercises aimed at learning to critically analyze information led many students to report less confidence in parsing political messages. And, where classroom democracy was limited, field trips to visit elected officials actually decreased general student interest in politics and political careers.

A number of recent studies have attempted to determine exactly what characteristics of school curricula and learning environments explain more and less successful outcomes (Kahne and Middaugh 2008). Not surprisingly, one factor that has emerged as very important in a wide range of studies is the openness of a school or classroom's climate (Torney-Purta 2002, Gibson and Levine 2003, Campbell 2005, McIntosh et al. 2007, Pasek et al. 2008). An important correlate to a generally open classroom environment is the presence of classroom discussion, of current events or other issues (Gibson & Levine 2003, McDevitt et al. 2003, Parker 2003, Syvertsen et al. 2007). Discussing hotly contested topics may particularly increase student interest in politics (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1996, Niemi and Junn 2005, Hess and Posselt 2002, Syvertsen et al. 2007). Another common finding has been the importance of offering

civic information in a context relevant to students' experiences (Gibson and Levine 2003, Niemi and Junn 2005, Pasek *et al.* 2008).

All of these conditions lend support to formally acknowledging and addressing different styles of citizenship (AC and DC) within the same pedagogy, and to permit more open school environments and more realistic experiences of politics to help students develop standpoints that make sense to them. However, instead of acknowledging different paradigms of citizenship and trying to bridge them, many educational policy makers, parents, and teachers continue to fight unproductively over singular definitions of the “good citizen.” (Hess 2004, Westheimer and Kahne 2004) In addition, few schools offer open learning environments, and those that do, tend to serve higher SES populations that are less at risk for subsequent civic engagement in the first place (Kahne and Middaugh 2008).

Some observers hoped that introducing community service as part of the school curriculum would add the important experiential element that often proved missing in the classroom. While long-term community involvement seems to increase certain aspects of political engagement (Niemi and Chapman 1998), especially when it is tied to classroom instruction (Gibson and Levine 2003, CIRCLE 2007), other research indicates that students may come away from character-building and volunteer activities with a diminished sense of the need to participate in politics and an inflated sense of the role of individual volunteerism (Westheimer and Kahne 2004, Kahne and Westheimer 2006).

Taken together, the failures to recognize and accommodate a broader range of citizen identity and learning preferences reveals a good deal about the limitations of school-based approaches to civic education. As illustrated in country after country in the 1999 IEA civic assessment of high school students, the predominant experience was

of one-way, individual oriented, textbook transmission of knowledge (see Torney-Purta *et al.* 1999, 2001). Illustrations of such approaches from the U.S. experience were listed at the opening of this section. These patterns of traditional, duty oriented, academic focus on government are deeply rooted in both the political and academic cultures of many nations and their schools.

The question is what to do when majorities of youth do not learn to become effective citizens in schools, and so many actually develop negative orientations in the process? What is perhaps most surprising is that ineffective educational policies (and surrounding political cultures) persist even though we know clearly what does and does not work. For example, Kahne and Middaugh's (2008) analysis of U.S. (California and IEA) survey data suggests that the civic education best practices include: discussing current events, studying issues that matter, interaction with meaningful civic role models, and learning about community problems, all in relatively open classroom environments. What can one conclude from the general resistance to incorporating such intuitively obvious practices in most schools? Perhaps under-resourced teachers and dispirited students in less advantaged schools do not have the luxury to practice these approaches. Perhaps education policy makers who are locked into rigid DC mindsets simply cannot imagine other models of AC citizenship that might motivate their students. Or, at the risk of probing the depths of the politics surrounding schools, perhaps resistance to democratically empowering young citizens is so alarming for many adults (parents, politicians, and educators) that persistent failure to achieve good results on imposed civic standards is a small price to pay. Failed policies beget more of the same.

The challenges of introducing effective civic learning conditions into the broad range of schools might encourage government, education policy makers and foundations to turn their attention to more malleable learning environments such as games and online communities where developers and managers may have more freedom to experiment with learning conditions. Yet these environments present their own problems. Although it may seem that online environments appeal more naturally to youth immersed in networking and participatory media cultures, preliminary investigations suggest that there are few clear standards for developing or assessing the civic potential of online environments (Raynes-Goldie and Walker 2008). Indeed, Coleman's (2008) studies of online youth engagement sites in the U.K. suggests that those high resource sites built by governments, foundations, and NGOs may reflect the same kinds of restrictive DC learning goals within heavily managed environments that hamper schools, while more open AC oriented sites are poorly resourced, often sparsely attended, and widely scattered in terms of their engagement values. We turn to developing a preliminary set of guidelines for better envisioning and assessing the prospects for civic learning online.

Toward a More General Set of Civic Learning Practices

Despite generally uneven performance, school-based civic education has created a legacy of often thoughtful and well-defined standards and practices. Even as many academic observers document the frustrations of school performance, they also find pockets of success that enable theorizing about how civic education might work in a more perfect world (Kahne and Middaugh 2008). Many of these practices range far beyond the conventional goals of learning how government works, to include other

kinds of learning that occur when students help generate discussion agendas, participate in deliberations, and experience various sorts of community involvement. Indeed, our exploration of civic education literature and various national civic renewal initiatives resulted in more than thirty measurable civic learning opportunities and related outcomes, ranging over knowledge, communication and media literacy skills, to understanding how people join groups and form community ties, and how to conduct and assess various forms of participation (Niemi and Chapman 1998, Torney-Purta *et al.* 1999, Torney-Purta *et al.* 2001, Gibson and Levine 2003, Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools 2008a). In addition to these direct measures of civic learning, a variety of secondary (civic orientation) outcomes have been associated with positive performance on the direct indicators. These orientations include: political efficacy, trust in government and others, and confidence in leaders and public institutions, among others. These numerous measures of civic competencies can be sorted out into five general categories that offer a useful starting point for rethinking civic learning goals:

- Knowledge/information (conventionally understood as knowing highlights of national history, basic grasp of how government works, following contemporary issues, etc.)
- Communication/expression (understanding media and information sources, parsing political messages, learning effective ways to present views through petitioning, writing letters, and learning how to contact representatives)
- Organization/membership (knowing the roles of parties, interest organizations, and civic groups and the reasons and bases for joining them)

- Action/participation (how to identify issues and participation alternatives such as voting, petitioning, or even protesting)
- Orientations/attitudes (efficacy, trust in others, attitudes toward government)

When various measures are sorted into this simple scheme, it is not clear that the failings of conventional approaches to civic education lie so much with the categories, themselves, as with the specific learning goals and pedagogies that typically populate them. Those learning modes, even in approaches that emphasize greater classroom participation, overwhelmingly tend to represent the dutiful citizen paradigm. Thus, it is hard to argue against knowledge or information as things that good citizens should possess, at least to some degree. However, we might want to think more critically about what kinds of knowledge should count and what sources are deemed credible. For example, the common civic learning goal of “*knowledge about government and politics*” seems perfectly reasonable as a DC learning goal. However, in order to accommodate the AC citizen experience and related learning preferences, we may wish to go beyond knowledge of how government works to address the workings of citizen-organized political processes, from how protest networks are organized in facebook, to the workings of direct consumer campaigns to change the labor, environmental, or trading practices of corporations. We may also wish to broaden the sources of credible political information beyond textbooks and other conventional sources to include direct citizen accounts of their political activities, information produced by peer knowledge networks such as *wikipedia*, and critical uses of online search tools. Similarly, in learning how people become involved with various forms of political action, it seems prudent to move beyond the usual government-centered repertoires of voting, campaigning, or

lobbying, to include opportunities to study or participate in more fluid political networks such as campaigns against misogyny in hip hop music or to promote greater environmental awareness. When we have developed a more comprehensive set of approaches, we can begin to think creatively about bridging the civic paradigms with examples such as ways in which grassroots media networks can enliven election campaigns, as happened in the U.S. in 2008 presidential election when millions of young voters were involved in creating, viewing and sharing YouTube videos primarily in the Obama campaign.

A preliminary framework that adds complementary AC outcomes to typical DC elements in the four main categories of civic learning is shown in Table 3. For the present discussion, this scheme leaves aside civic orientations such as trust and efficacy that are generally regarded as secondary or indirect results of positive exposure to learning experiences in the main areas of information, expression, organization and action. As a result of their secondary status, these orientations cannot be observed directly as properties of learning environments.

Civic Learning Dimension	Sample DC Goals	Sample AC Goals
<i>Knowledge/information</i>	national history emphasizing common experiences and myths, how government works, following contemporary issues in the news	generational histories emphasizing different life experiences and legitimate frustrations with government, how direct action networks operate, credible sources of information outside of the news (e.g., participatory information sources such as wikipedia)
<i>Communication/expression</i>	understanding conventional media and information sources, parsing political messages, learning effective ways to present views through petitioning, writing letters, and learning how to contact representatives	understanding digital media and peer information sources, learning participatory media skills (blogging, video production), learning how to use digital media to reach various audiences
<i>Organization/membership</i>	knowing the roles of parties, interest organizations, and civic groups and the reasons and bases for joining them	knowing the roles of social networking and online communities (e.g., moveon, Taking IT Global) and the reasons and bases for joining them
<i>Action/participation</i>	identification of participation paths to government, such as voting, campaigning, courts	identification of paths to join or organize effective peer advocacy networks for direct action
<i>Orientations/attitudes</i>	efficacy, trust in others, confidence in institutions and government	empowerment, trust in networks, confidence in participatory skills

Table 3: Expanded Civic Learning Framework Including AC Goals

Expanding the range of opportunities and practices that define the basic categories of civic learning enables us to better recognize the lived political experiences of youth in many societies. Broadening the framework also enables us to address diverse sites of civic learning, from schools to online environments.

Recognizing the Civic Potential of Online Environments

One benefit of articulating a more comprehensive set of civic learning practices is to be able to determine a) which learning goals, b) are more or less likely to be met, c) for what youth populations, d) in what environments and e) through which practices. If particular online environments turn out to be better than schools in achieving specific goals (or if they enhance school effectiveness when used as part of school civics curricula), then scholars and practitioners may well benefit from paying closer attention to civic life online. Similarly, if some online environments work better (or can be designed better) than others for imparting particular civic skills, then we may also want to explore and compare online sites (see Bennett 2008).

It seems clear that many opportunities for meaningful civic learning exist in online environments using technologies that are familiar and appealing to digital natives, a term that Prensky (2001) coined to refer to people born after 1980 and coming of age with interactive, convergent digital media. However, we wish to avoid two sorts of sweeping generalizations that are often made both about so-called digital natives and the richness of civic life online.

First, with regard to digital natives, it is easy to over generalize about the breadth and depth of various media skills presumably possessed by anyone under 25. Critics caution that exaggerating the capacities of this population beyond their actual access and

skill levels has become something akin to a moral panic (Bennett *et al.* forthcoming). Even populations as sophisticated as undergraduates at Stanford or Berkeley do not automatically understand what a blog is, why one might want to participate in blogging, or how to do it effectively even if so motivated (Rheingold 2008). The knowledge, motivation, and skills deficits are surely even greater in more typical youth populations. For example, a 2008 survey in the U.K. found that 24 percent of families with children under 16 had no Internet access at home (Curtis 2008). Even if the access gap can be closed, the second digital divide -- namely, what people can and want to do with their access -- remains an even deeper mystery. Thus we wish to avoid assumptions about access, motives, or skills that potential users of various youth sites will automatically bring with them. We also want to think seriously about how skills training can be added to online environments (and, of course to schools) so that important segments of the youth population are not inadvertently excluded from participation.

Second, with respect to what kinds of engagement experiences are available online, it is clear that digital media and web networks offer great potential for reinvigorating youth participation (Delli Carpini 2000, Iyengar and Jackman 2003, Montgomery *et al.* 2004). However, a large volume of intuitive and under-investigated generalizations stand in the way of clearly understanding how and when such potential may be realized, ranging from claims that experiences in video war games and popular culture fan sites are somehow civic, to the equally fervent convictions of designers and managers of youth engagement sites that their environments offer the kinds of civic experiences young people should have (Bennett 2008).

Our view is that there may well be important civic learning going on in *World of Warcraft*, or among users of a political party youth site, but we would like to ask and

investigate such questions as: What kind of learning is it? What different youth populations may be engaged by it? What civic skills can they take away to use in other settings? and How can we compare those environments, populations and skills? The good news is that these are all eminently researchable questions. The bad news is that they have not been subject to much serious investigation, with a few notable exceptions such as Livingstone (2007) and Coleman (2008).

Our framework opens the way for constructing measures that can be used to compare the learning opportunities available in different online environments. The goal here is to make modest predictions that help build theory. For example, it seems reasonable to expect that youth sites managed by relatively hierarchical organizations such as political parties will focus on DC models of citizenship with very top down information provision and highly structured participation opportunities (centered on campaigning and voting for party candidates). By contrast, online only youth engagement sites that offer more expressive web 2.0 experiences may implicitly favor AC citizen skills. Indeed, a preliminary study by Wells (2007) of online only youth sites found that the predominant engagement features fell largely within AC categories, and that the ratio of AC to DC features varied significantly according to Coleman's (2008) distinction of whether the site heavily managed user behavior or offered greater autonomy for users to express themselves.

Research currently in progress using our framework involves coding a sample of some 90 predominantly U.S. youth engagement sites ranging from those sponsored by predominantly offline organizations (e.g., party, campaign, service and interest organizations) that maintain an online youth site, to organizations in which young people can only participate online. We have developed a coding scheme to screen every site for

both DC and AC learning opportunities in all four categories of Table 3. For example, here are the coding instructions for DC and AC versions of communication/expression learning opportunities (the first instruction refers coders to a DC expression learning opportunity and the second instruction screens for presence or absence of an AC learning opportunity):

Expression

Many sites want to help users express their views about public issues or concerns. Sites may encourage users to express themselves in a variety of ways. Looking at the pages selected from this site:

1. Do any of the pages present users with training on how to communicate using traditional forms of public communication?
 - a. For example, the site may offer templates or toolkits on writing letters to the editor or to a political representative, calling or contacting a legislator, running a canvass, or bringing a speaker to campus.
 - b. They may also offer guidelines—like do's and don't's—for communicating effectively in those ways.
2. Do any of the pages present users with training on how to communicate effectively with digital media they can produce themselves?
 - a. For example the page may offer templates or toolkits on how to create a blog or webpage, or tips on creating videos or podcasts. How to create media in general or how to post content on the site are included.
 - b. They may also offer guidelines—like do's and don't's—for communicating effectively in those ways.

Subsequent reports and publications will elaborate this coding scheme and the results of mapping a broad spectrum of youth sites according to their various civic learning features. From such maps we can compare different types of sites, as well as compare populations of youth sites in different nations. In addition, we imagine experimental studies that will enable us to understand how and what young people

(perhaps pre-tested for their positioning along an AC-DC continuum) learn from their engagement with various types of sites. Since our framework is an extension of the baseline learning frameworks developed in earlier school-based research, this research may eventually enable us to draw comparisons between the civic learning potential of schools and online environments, both as they affect young citizens separately, and when used together to facilitate civic learning.

Conclusion

Even if our proposed expansion of conventional civic learning practices proves too politically sensitive for schools to implement -- or for various authorities rooted in the DC civic paradigm to recognize -- there are important reasons to broaden our framework for thinking about of civic learning:

- First, this expanded framework makes explicit what is now more often left implicit: that the very conceptions of appropriate citizenship and politics are contested in many societies (and the voices of young people are often underdeveloped and undervalued in these contests).
- Second, even if many of these contested practices do not make it immediately into schools, simply recognizing their existence may broaden the policy debates that gradually shape civic education practices.
- Perhaps most importantly, this framework expands our conception of civic learning to include sites beyond schools, such as online environments, where important civic learning may occur. Our expanded framework may help us think about the design properties and assessment approaches appropriate for those potentially important sites of learning.

The last point merits a bit of elaboration. While the limitations of schools as sites of civic learning are by now fairly well understood, the civic potential of online environments remains underdeveloped due to the lack of established learning frameworks for designing and assessing sites and user experiences. This results in the proliferation of sites that are uneven and relatively uncharted in terms of what kinds of engagement skills they offer young people. Where schools may be faulted for their (often willful) failures to keep pace with changes in youth civic identities and participation styles, there is a corresponding gap among developers of online civic environments to formalize and share learning models and opportunities that can be coded into platforms and features.

We offer the above framework as a first step toward a comparative model that enables us to assess and compare approaches to civic learning in different settings from schools to online communities. From these comparisons we may move toward more ambitious understandings of civic properties of games, popular culture sites, and other places where young people gather in large numbers. Indeed, the ultimate goal may be to break down arbitrary distinctions between private and public, commercial and civic so that the best features of different on and offline environments enhance the potential of learning to participate effectively in politics.

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